



FIELD TRIPS

As is traditional during the national volunteer monitoring conference, local folks graciously organized and led a series of field trips. Members of Austin's environmental community took conference participants on guided tours of some of the Austin-area's most notable natural features. In addition, volunteer conference attendees had the opportunity to participate in the last session of the National Water Quality Monitoring Council's second national conference, also held in Austin. Brief descriptions of the field trips as well as contact information for the trip leaders is provided below.

Austin Creeks—

Austin straddles the banks of the Colorado River, and has more than a dozen creeks flowing through its corridors. Several of these creeks have been identified as being threatened or impaired due, primarily, to fecal coliform bacteria levels. Field trip participants explored some of these local streams and observed demonstrations of different sampling methods. The tour included visits to both relatively pristine and clearly impaired urban streams and participants conducted a little investigative research with alternative monitoring methods.

leaders: Jacob Daniel Apodaca, Volunteer Coordinator, Colorado River Watch Network
Lower Colorado River Authority
PO Box 220, Mail Stop H219, Austin, TX 78767-0220
phone: 800/776-5272 ext. 7859

Mateo Scoggins, Coordinator, Austin Water Watchdogs
City of Austin, Watershed Protection Department
PO Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767-1088
phone: 512/499-1917

Barton Creek—

This field trip included a greenbelt drive and hike concluding at Edwards Aquifer Splash Exhibit at Barton Springs Pool. Sometimes referred to as the Crown Jewel of Austin, the spring-fed Barton Springs Pool must contend with the inevitable desire of people to exploit the natural beauty of this watershed for the development of homes, shopping centers, and all the subsequent trappings that accompany urbanization. Participants hiked portions of the greenbelt intended to protect this creek.

leader: Jason Pinchback, Program Specialist, Texas Watch
Southwest Texas State University
601 University Drive, San Marcos, TX 78666-4616
phone: 512/245-9148

Area Springs and Sinkholes—

You know you're in the Texas Hill Country when you happen upon one of these gaping holes in the earth called a sinkhole. Often abused in the past as convenient dumping pits, these sensitive recharge features in this karst aquifer region are vivid reminders of the typically unseen interface between surface and groundwater. In addition to visiting local sinkholes, participants were shown some of the area's many springs. Local experts described the processes which contribute to these fascinating natural features and also discussed efforts to preserve them.



leader: Nico Hauwert, Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District
1124 Regal Row, Austin, TX 78748
phone: 512/282-8441

Hamilton Pool & Westcave Preserve—

Travel just a few miles west of Austin and it is possible to believe that the area is still on the verge of wilderness. The focal point of the 232 acre Hamilton Pool Preserve is the pool and grotto formed by the collapse of an underground river and a 45 foot waterfall. Just across the Pedernales River (a tributary of the Colorado) is Westcave Preserve, a 31-acre oasis of cypress, moss, fern and orchids surrounding a beautiful travertine pool beneath a waterfall over the small cave. Tour guides discussed area vegetation, wildlife and geologic features.

leaders: Mike Lyday, City of Austin, Watershed Protection Department
PO Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767-1088
phone: 512/499-2956

Amber Ahrns, Preserve Manager, Hamilton Pool
PO Box 1748, Austin, TX 78767
phone: 512/264-2740

John Ahrns, Preserve Manager, Westcave Preserve
HC04 Box 30-C, Dripping Springs, TX 78620
phone: 830/825-3442

Innovative BMPs in Austin—

Participants in this field trip took a tour of innovative BMPs around the city. Austin has made impressive strides in mitigating the impacts of impervious cover on surface waters and this tour guided participants through some of the most noteworthy structural best management practices around town.

leaders: Bob Critendon, Nonpoint Source Pollution Program
Lower Colorado River Authority
PO Box 220, Mail Stop M107, Austin, TX 78767-0110

National Water Quality Monitoring Conference Final Session—

From April 25-27, 2000, the National Water Quality Monitoring Council (NWQMC) held its second national conference in downtown Austin. The last session of that conference, attended by many volunteer conference participants, summarized themes explored during the NWQMC conference (public outreach, collaborative efforts, data management, methods and data comparability, interactions among watershed components, and water information strategies). The NWQMC conference concluded with an open mike session where volunteer monitoring folks were able to engage in discussion with the professional monitoring program representatives attending the conference. To learn more about this conference, and the Council, visit the Council Website at water.usgs.gov/wicp/acwi/monitoring/